

# A snippet from Talyn

written by Holly

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Just a little tiny piece of the story I'm working on right now. Gair is the team leader for a covert team moving against Talyn's people.

*NOTE: This is first-draft, straight-off-the-keyboard, unrevised fresh text. It is posted for fun, so that I can share a little of what I'm working on. The final version of this section will be different and may be **significantly** different, or may not even exist within the completed novel. Please do not report spellos, typos, or other errors in the comments; I don't use my weblog as a copyediting tool.*

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Gair sat with his back to the fireplace, far into the shadowed back corner of the tavern, where he could pour his beers into the sawdust without the serving girl noticing.

She brought him drinks regularly, and recited the short list of meals offered at Black Hodd's with a charming cheerfulness when he asked, and without hesitation recommended the roast pheasant as being the best meal on the menu when he expressed uncertainty. She did not look twice at his silver, and she had a bright smile and round, full breasts that he got to admire every time she set a drink down for him, or took an empty mug away; she wore her outer tunic open to the waist, while the cloth of the inner tunic was so gauzy it provided nothing more than a few faint, lacy patterns across those fine, ripe peaks.

At one point, while the evening was still young, she settled into the bench across from him and said, "You're all alone. Have you no friends to come and keep you company?"

"I'm traveling," he said. "All my friends are in Lodestaak."

"You are a long way from home, then. You must be here for the Alltaak Hend."

"No." He sighed. "Merely inconvenienced by it."

It took her an instant to work her way through that. "You had a hard time finding a room, then."

"I bought myself space on the floor under the eaves here, tucked in with half a dozen men who will no doubt snore and kick," he said, laughing a little, "and when I wake I fear it will be to find my face in some stranger's unwashed armpit. Meanwhile, my horse is roofless in the common corral, left to fend for himself, but I think, looking around at my probable floormates here, that I would trade places with him."

She nodded wisely. "I thought you neither old enough or fat enough to be a taaklord." She'd touched his shoulder and whispered in his ear, "Nor rude enough; you have not once pinched me or offered to pay me for my services." She frowned at that, and he realized that she was not a whore; the serving girls in the Republic usually were. "I have a room and a bed at the boarding house. We're not actually permitted to have guests at night, but if you were very quiet and left after the housemistress left for market in the morning, you could share with me. Some of your would-be roommates are very drunk already and have been mixing their beer with house wine; I do not envy you their company. Besides, I don't think I snore, and I do wash my armpits." She gave him a little wink and had the grace to blush.

His regret was genuine when he said, "If I did not have to be on the road before the sun rose in the morning, I could not

say no. In my whole journey, no one so pretty has been so kind.”

She smiled as she rose and cleared away his meal. “If you change your mind, only let me know before I leave.”

So she would not be making the same offer to anyone else.

He was sorely tempted. He was not certain if she was offering just her bed, or if she had included her body in her invitation, but even if it was just the former, he had not enjoyed the pleasure of a woman in his bed in long months. For that matter, he had not enjoyed a bed in that same time. Mostly he'd had his camp cot and his bedroll, and sometimes just the hard ground.

And she was so round, and so sweet.

He bit the inside of his lip; letting his mind wander over the imagined hills and valleys of her sleek young body would not help him get through the night, and taking his mind off of his mission would not let him get back to the Republic, to women who were equally succulent but not enemies to his nation and his cause.

He sighed, welcoming the distraction of a group of five men who strolled into Black Hodd's as if it and everyone in it belonged to them.

They wore black. Black silk, black linen, black embroidered wool, black round-domed hats and black cloaks, black overshirts and full pantaloons, shiny black riding boots with tall heels and silver-capped toes.

Feegash.

Gair's lip curled in loathing, an involuntary reaction that he saw echoed on the faces of many in the bar.

He would say this for the barbarian Tonks; they were good

enemies. They had no more liking for a soft, easy solution than his people had. He had not heard one soul speak in favor of negotiated peace since he arrived in Injtaak. Not one.

Well, the serving girl's fat, rude taaklords and the meddling Feegash would die in the morning, and Republican troops, massing on the border to enter Tonk lands the instant his communications man sent word of his unit's success, would bring civilization and real peace to this place after centuries of war.

Maybe he would find the serving girl again once his work was done.

Maybe she wouldn't hate him too much.

He sat, watching the Feegash, despising them along with everyone else in the big, crowded room, awash in an unexpected feeling of kinship and sympathy toward the Tonks.

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